Sainik Schools

1304. SHRI RAMENDRA KUMAR : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) the details of the sainik schools set up during the last three years in the country, State-wise;

(b) whether not a single sainik school has been set up in the State of Bihar during the said period; and

(c) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI N.V.N. SOMU) : (a) to (c). Since 1978, no new Sainik School has been opened in any of the States in the country.

Transit Facilities through Bangladesh

1305. SHRI SURESH KALMADI : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have requested Bangladesh to grant transit facilities for goods passing through that country to India's North-eastern States; and

(b) if so, the response of Bangladesh thereto?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) The Government of India have been interested in securing multi-modal transit facilities through the Bangladesh territory to the North Eastern States and have taken up the matter with the Government of Bangladesh on a number of occasions.

(b) The Government of Bangladesh have not yet reacted positively to our proposals.

External Publicity

1306. SHRI PARASRAM BHARDWAJ : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the steps being taken to revamp our external publicity departments functioning abroad so as to improve the country's image abroad and also to project our viewpoints more forcefully on sensitive and important issues;

(b) whether Government propose to appoint professionals for this purpose; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI I.K. GUJRAL) : (a) Several new steps have been taken to explain, interpret and project India's Foreign Policy objectives. These included the opening of MEA's Home Page on INTERNET; upgradation of our communications system with missions and posts abroad; use of modern publicity techniques and professional public relations; lobbying and advertising agencies; diversification and augmentation of channels of communications and mass media including projection through satellite television; and broad basing of publicity by involvement of no governmental and professional agencies. India's foreig and economic policies and specific initiatives in bo areas have been well received. The policy transparency combined with new initiatives on Kashm and human rights issues and their foreceful projectio abroad have contained Pakistan's propaganda again India on these issues. There has been a perceptib improvement in India's international image in the med and amongst the public abroad.

(b) and (c). The Government already emplo professional and professional agencies in th preparation and placement of its publicity material Such agencies are regularly used in the production publications, documentary or video films, feature articl on various subjects, public relation activities, advertisi and media strategy.

[Translation]

Four Laning of NH-24

1307. SHRI SANTOSH KUMAR GANGWAR : W the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased state :

(a) whether any proposal to convert the Delh Bareilly-Lucknow highway (National Highway-24) in four lanes is pending with the Government;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken/proposed to be taken by t Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SH T.G. VENKATRAMAN) : (a) to (c). The total length Delhi-Bareilly-Lucknow highway (NH-24) is 499 km. T portion of NH-24 from Delhi to Ghaziabad 28 km. length is already four lane. The remaining 471 k length is having 2 lane carriageway. 4 laning Ghaziabad-Hapur Section including Hapur bypa totalling a length of 32 km. is included in the 8th Fi Year Plan and the work is proposed to be executed w loan assistance from Overseas Economic Cooperati Fund (Japan). The loan agreement was signed in Fe 1995.

[English]

Blood Bank

1308. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE pleased to state :

(a) whether any representations have been receiv from the State of Kerala for the issue of licences Blood Bank during 1996;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of licences issued to the applican